

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
1433 13th Avenue
Altoona PA 16601

**What we are
is God's gift to us.
What we become
is our gift to God!**

**November/
December 2011**

Glad Tidings

**Holy Trinity
Greek Orthodox Church
1433 13th Avenue
Altoona PA 16601**

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St. Spyridon

We welcome you to Divine Liturgy today. Whether you are an Orthodox Christian, or this is your first visit to an Orthodox Church, we are pleased to have you with us. Although **Holy Communion** is reserved for baptized and chrismated (confirmed) Orthodox Christians, all are invited to receive the "**antidoron**" which is not a sacrament, but is a reminder of the "agape feast" that followed worship in the early Church. **After the Divine Liturgy this morning, please join us in the Church Hall for fellowship and refreshments.** We hope you will return often to worship with us, to grow in Christ and in our Orthodox Faith.

Schedule of Divine Services

- SUNDAY, NOV. 6:** 10:30am/St. Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople, Confessor; The Righteous Luke of Tauromen; Righteous Paul; Nikandros the Martyr
- SUNDAY, NOV. 13:** 10:30am/John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople and author of the Divine Liturgy; Righteous Damaskenos the Martyr
- SUNDAY, NOV. 20:** 10:30am/Preparation for the Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple; Righteous Gregory of Decapolis; St. Proklos, Patriarch of Constantinople; Maximos and Anatolios, Patriarchs of Constantinople; Righteous Sozomenos the Wonderworker; Righteous Dasios
- SUNDAY, NOV. 27:** 10:30am/Greatmartyr Jacob (Iakovos) of Persia; Righteous Nathaniel
- SUNDAY, DEC. 4:** 10:30am/Great Martyr Barbara; Righteous John of Damascus; Holymartyr Seraphim the Younger, Bishop of the Phanarion
- SUNDAY, DEC. 11:** 10:30am/Holy Forefathers of Christ; Righteous Daniel and Luke the Younger, the Stylites; Nomon and Leontios; Barsabas and Meiracos the Martyrs
- SUNDAY, DEC. 18:** 10:30am/Pre-Nativity: The Genealogy; Martyrs Sevastianos of Milan, Zoe and their Companions; Modestos, Patriarch of Jerusalem; Righteous Floros, Bishop of Amea
- SATURDAY, DEC. 24:** 8:00pm/The Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ in the Flesh

DURING HOLY COMMUNION, we ask that everyone stand quietly in the pews for it is disrespectful to talk during this Holy Sacrament. WHEN RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION, please make sure you state your baptized name after Fr. John states 'The servant (or handmaiden) of God...' We also ask that you hold the red cloth underneath your chin in case an accident should happen. As always, we ask that children come first to receive Holy Communion, then the adults.

OUR MISSION IS TO GLORIFY OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST THROUGH OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS, ACCORDING TO THE HOLY TRADITIONS AND SACRED TEACHINGS OF OUR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH!

Thanksgiving Day Customs

The Thanksgiving legacy has been alive for hundreds of years. The customs we see in our homes today remind us of ancient celebrations of harvest, thankfulness for peace, and the endeavors of Native Americans. It consists of stories of those who believe that gratitude for blessings is a virtue all must possess.

For centuries, Thanksgiving Day is associated with communal prayers in church and in homes. People offer various meal time prayers during the day. It is a time, when mankind thanks God for all His blessings and grace. It is also a day to show gratitude to your friends and relatives for all the good deeds.

Everyone follows the custom of family dinner and reunion religiously every year. Distances don't really matter as relatives drive down to be with their family. Feasts are usually held at home. It is a time to enjoy their favorite roasted turkey with the family.

Thanksgiving is a time to decorate homes with wreaths, fresh and dried flowers. People beautify their homes, give the interiors a whole new look and feel. They light lamps to brighten the environment. Tables are adorned with best china and antique silver cutlery to mark the occasion.

Thanksgiving is a day when people send loving messages and warm wishes to their relatives, colleagues at work places, superiors and subordinates, near and dear ones. It is a day of conveying their feelings.



Thank You, O Lord

Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.

Thank You, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which we offered to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which filled our hearts with the joy, peace and righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and given us the foretaste of Your Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having united us to one another in serving You and Your Holy Church.

Thank You, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions, and temptations and restored peace, mutual love and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O Lord, for the sufferings You bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and reminding us of the "one thing needed"; Your eternal Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You.

Thank You, O Lord, for our families: husbands, wives, and especially children, who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement and holy noise.

Thank You, O Lord, for everyone and everything.

Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds, and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles.

Lord, it is good to be here! Amen!

PRAYER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILIES

I pray to You, God, for the families of my neighborhood.

Visit them. Throw their troubles out of them and bring hope. Make the daily cares that devour the heart disappear. Present solutions to life's problems. Settle the disturbed relationships among members of different families whom I know or I don't know.

O Lord, remind the people of our area that You exist, that You are a strong and loving Protector.

Keep away, Lord, anything that causes the disappearance of peace from souls, and the escape of sleep from our eyes. Stay a little while more tonight in our neighborhood.

Spread peace along with the night. Let the harshness of the day and its struggles not spread over the night too, God.

~Archbishop Demetrios of America~



A RECEPTION HONORING METROPOLITAN MAXIMOS' RETIREMENT

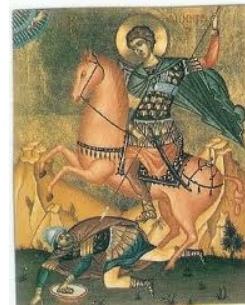
will be held at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 419 South Dithridge St., Pittsburgh, PA on Saturday, November 5th from 12:30-4:30pm. Join Archbishop Demetrios of America, Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit (Locum Tenens), the Metropolis Council and other honored guests for this reception honoring the ministry of our beloved Metropolitan.

**RSVP by
November 2nd—
Phone: 412.621.5529 or
E-mail: info@odpgh.org.**

DEMETRIOS THE MYRRHBEARER & GREAT MARTYR OF THESSALONIKI

October 26

Saint Demetrius was a Thessalonian, a most pious son of pious and noble parents, and a teacher of the Faith of Christ. When Maximian first came to Thessalonica in 290, he raised the Saint to the rank of Duke of Thessaly. But when it was discovered that the Saint was a Christian, he was arrested and kept in a bathhouse. While the games were under way in the city, Maximian was a spectator there. A certain friend of his, a barbarian who was a notable wrestler, Lyaeus by name, waxing haughty because of the height and strength of his body, boasted in the stadium and challenged the citizens to a contest with him. All that fought with him were defeated. Seeing this, a certain youth named Nestor, acquaintance of Demetrius', came to the Saint in the bathhouse and asked his blessing to fight Lyaeus single-handed. Receiving this blessing and sealing himself with the sign of the precious Cross, he presented himself in the stadium, and said, "O God of Demetrius, help me!" and straightway he engaged Lyaeus in combat and smote him with a mortal blow to the heart, leaving the former boaster lifeless upon the earth. Maximian was sorely



grieved over this, and when he learned who was the cause of this defeat, he commanded straightway and Demetrius was pierced with lances while he was yet in the bathhouse.

THE PRIDE OF OXI DAY

October 28

The magnificent Greek holiday Oxi Day is celebrated every year in Greece on October 28th and mostly remembered for General Ioannis Metaxas' strong reply of "oxi" (no) to Mussolini's request to allow Italian troops to come into Greece at the beginning of WW 2. The result of this stern message was powerful, and in the end, helped to maintain Greece's course of neutrality for generations to come. Nevertheless, the Italians did invade Greece, but were subsequently driven back into Albania.

The story begins in 1935, when King George II was restored to the Greek throne by a rigged plebiscite, where he made the right-wing General Ioannis Metaxas prime minister. Nine months later, Metaxas assumed dictatorial powers with the king's consent under the pretext of preventing a communist-inspired republican coup. The October 28 national holiday also marks the date in 1940 when Greece entered WW 2.

On that cherished day in Greek history, prime minister Ioannis Metaxas not only rejected Italy's ultimatum, he chose the road of resistance, and thus saved his reputation as a dictator. Cypriot countrymen also drew inspiration from Greece's refusal to let Italian troops invade in 1940 in the face of continued Turkish aggression. For that matter, parades are also staged by Greek communities around the world in celebration of Oxi Day.

FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE INTO THE TEMPLE OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE THEOTOKOS.....

November 21

At the age of three, Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, dedicated her to God and presented her to the temple. As was customary, dedicated children stayed with holy men of the temple for 12 years. The birth and early life of the Virgin Mary is not recorded in the Gospels or other books of the New Testament, however this information can be found in a work dating from the second century known as the Book of James or Protevangelion.

When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna decided that the time had come to fulfill their promise and to offer her to the Lord. Joachim gathered the young girls of the neighborhood to form an escort, and he made them go in front of Mary, carrying torches. Captivated by the torches, the young child followed joyfully to the Temple, not once looking back at her parents nor weeping as she was parted from them.

The holy Virgin ran toward the Temple, overtaking her attendant maidens and threw herself into the arms of the High Priest Zacharias, who was waiting for her at the gate of the Temple with the elders. Zacharias blessed her saying, "It is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days."

Then, Zacharias brought the child into the Holy of Holies – a place where only the High Priest was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. He placed her on the steps of the altar, and the grace of the Lord descended upon her. She arose and expressed her joy in a dance as wonder seized all who saw this happen.

The Virgin Mary dwelt in the Temple for nine years until, reaching an age for marriage, she

was taken from the Temple by the priests and elders and entrusted to Joseph as the guardian of her virginity.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple signifies her total dedication to God and her readiness for her future vocation as the Mother of the Incarnate Lord. This is a feast of anticipation. As honor is shown to Mary, the faithful are called to look forward to the Incarnation of Christ, celebrated in a little more than a month by the Feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25.

BARBARA THE GREAT MARTYR

December 4

Saint Barbara was from Heliopolis of Phoenicia and lived during the reign of Maximian. She was the daughter of a certain idolater named Dioscorus. When Barbara came of age, she was enlightened in her pure heart and secretly believed in the Holy Trinity. About this time Dioscorus began building a bathhouse; before it was finished he was required to go away to attend to certain matters, and in his absence Barbara directed the workmen to build a third window in addition to the two her father had commanded. She also inscribed the sign of the Cross with her finger upon the marble of the bathhouse, leaving the saving sign cut as deeply into the marble as if it had been done with an iron too. (When the Synaxarion of Saint Barbara was written, the marble of the bathhouse and the cross inscribed by Saint Barbara were still preserved, and many healings were worked there). When Dioscorus returned, he asked why the third window had been added; Barbara began to declare to him the mystery of the Trinity. Because she refused to renounce her faith, Dioscorus tortured Barbara inhumanely, and after subjecting her to many sufferings he beheaded her with his own hands, in the year 290.

SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER OF TRYMITHOUS

December 12

Spyridon, the God-bearing Father of the Church, the great defender of Corfu and the boast of all the Orthodox, had Cyprus as his homeland. He was simple in manner and humble of heart, and was a shepherd of sheep. When he was joined to a wife, he begat of her a daughter whom they thus named Irene. After his wife's departure from this life, he was appointed Bishop of Trimythus, and thus he became also a shepherd of rational sheep. When the First Ecumenical Council was assembled in Nicea, he also was present, and by means of his most simple words stopped the mouths of the Arians who were wise in their own conceit. By the divine grace which dwelt in him, he wrought such great wonders that he received the surname "Wonderworker." So it is that, having tended his flock piously and in a manner pleasing to God, he reposed in the Lord about the year 350, leaving to his country his sacred relics as a consolation and source of healing for the faithful.

About the middle of the seventh century, because of the incursions made by the barbarians at that time, his sacred relics were taken to Constantinople, where they remained, being honored by the emperors themselves. But before the fall of Constantinople, which took place on May 29, 1453, a certain priest named George Kalokhairetes, the parish priest of the church where the Saint's sacred relics, as well as those of Saint Theodora the Empress, were kept, took them away on account of the impending peril. Travelling by way of Serbia, he came as far as Arta in Epirus, a region in Western Greece opposite to the isle of Corfu. From there, while the misfortunes of the Christian people were increasing with every day, he passed over to Corfu about the year 1460. The relics of Saint Theodora were given to the people of Corfu; but those of Saint Spyridon remain to this day, according to the rights of inheritance, the most precious treasure of the priest's own descendants, and they continue to be a staff for the faithful in Orthodoxy, and a supernatural wonder for those that behold him; for even after the passage of 1,500 years, they have remained incorrupt, and even the flexibility of his flesh has been preserved. Truly wondrous is God in His Saints!

THE LIFE IN CHRIST IS AN ADVENTURE filled with difficulties and heartbreak, but also faith, hope, love and joy.

For those who are on the pathway, I pray that they will continue. For those who have not yet made a full commitment to Christ and His Church, I pray that they will do so today. Christ calls each of us to serve Him, and He offers all who do so the gift of His loving presence.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS BACK

one hour before bedtime on Saturday, November 5th — Daylight Savings Time ends. We will gain 1 hour of sleep to make us more alert to worship our Lord Jesus Christ.



THE FIRE OF BURNING...

candles and lamps, like the censer with its hot needles and aromatic incense, serves as a reminder of the spiritual fire- the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of flame. It scorches our sinful misdemeanors, illuminates the minds and hearts, kindles our souls with a love for God and towards each other. Lite a candle on Sunday for your loved ones or friends, both living or deceased.

ATTENTION

PARISHIONERS! As always, we ask you to please be considerate of how you leave the pews after Sunday Divine Liturgy. Clean-up any crumbs or garbage left by family members. This will keep our church beautiful and neat!

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE AS

FOLLOWS: Single person - \$275; Family - \$350. Dues may be paid in one lump sum or in installments. Please see our Church Treasurer Eric Casanave. If you wish to give more towards the church, please do so! It helps our ministry in spreading the Good News of Christ!

Christmas Lent

For the devout Orthodox, the Christmas Season begins with Christmas Lent (November 15 to December 24). It should be a time of fasting, receiving Holy Communion and reflection before the major feast day of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas). The following prayers will convey to all of us what this Nativity Fast (Christmas Lent) should be in our lives. Let's prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming of the Infant Messiah!

For families with older children:

Lord Jesus, You have come so many times to us and found no resting place, forgive us for our overcrowded lives, our vain haste and our preoccupation with self. Come again, O Lord, and though our hearts are a jumble of voices, and our minds overlaid with many fears, find a place however humble where You can begin to work Your wonder as You create peace and joy within us. If in some hidden corner, in some out-of-the-way spot, we can clear away the clutter, and shut out the noise and darkness, come be born again in us, and we shall kneel in perfect peace with the wisest and humblest of men.

Help us to enter into this Christmas Fast with humility, yet with joy. And finally Lord, give us Christmas from within that we may share it from without, on all sides, all around us, wherever there is need. God help us every one, to share the blessing of Jesus, in whose name we keep Christmas holy. Amen.

For families with younger children:

Lord, our God as You entered into the world as a newborn baby, enter also into our hearts so that we may prepare for Your glorious coming. Help us to be still so we can hear the angels announce Your Nativity. Helps us to keep our eyes clear so we may follow the star to Your Son's birth. Help us to turn our minds, hearts, and whole bodies toward You so that we may realize that the best gifts come from above. As You so loved the world that You gave us Your only begotten Son, help us to share this love with family, friends, enemies, and everyone we meet.



FEAST OF OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS, NICHOLAS, THE WONDERWORKER AND ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA — December 6



Our Holy Father Nicholas, emulator of the Apostles and ardent imitator of the Lord Jesus Christ, appears as a living pillar of the Church, zealous in defense of the faith and a model of pastoral solicitude for holy bishops. Through his countless miracles on behalf of the poor, the abandoned, of those suffering injustice and of all who call upon his fatherly protection, he has to this day shown himself "a good steward of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

St. Nicholas was born in Patara in Lycia towards the end of the third century, to Christian parents who had long been childless. From infancy, he showed his love of virtue and his zeal for observing the ordinances of the Church by abstaining from his mother's breast on Wednesdays and Fridays until the evening. Pious and inclined to silence, he was educated in theology and, while still young, was ordained priest by his uncle, Archbishop Nicholas. For many years, vigil, fasting and

prayer were the virtues he excelled in, but from the time of his parents' death and his giving away his inheritance to the needy, the virtue of almsgiving became his greatest glory to God. He regarded himself merely as the steward of goods which belonged to the poor and took particular care to keep his good deeds secret, so as not to love the heavenly reward (Matthew 6:7). On three occasions he secretly left gold enough for the marriage portions of three maidens whom their debt-ridden father intended to give up to prostitution. When the man eventually discovered his good deed, Nicholas made him promise, as he valued his salvation, to tell no one of it.

God recompensed him through the chrismata and miracles for which he became renowned in the sight of men. On pilgrimage to the Holy Places he twice by his prayer calmed the winds that imperiled the ship he was sailing in. Soon after his return, an angel made known to the synod of bishops, meeting to elect a shepherd for the nearby city of Myra, that they should choose Nicholas - which they did, to the joy of the people. During the last great persecution under Diocletian and Maximian (c. 305), Saint Nicholas was thrown into prison where he continued to

confirm his spiritual flock in the faith. With the accession of Constantine, he was very zealous for the destruction of idolatrous temples and for driving out the demons that inhabited them. Among the Fathers gathered at Nicea in 325 for the First Ecumenical Council, Nicholas was one of the leading champions of Orthodoxy against the impious heresy of Arius, which had so swiftly sprung up to trouble the divine the holy Body of Christ.

He saved the city of Myra from famine by appearing to the master of a vessel laden with corn, and telling him to discharge his cargo at the harbor there. Later the man of God saved the lives of three Roman officers unjustly accused of conspiracy, by appearing in a dream to the Emperor Constantine. Full of gratitude to the Saint for their deliverance, the three soldiers became monks.

Saint Nicholas, with Saint George, is one of the Saints most beloved by Christian people in the East as well as in the West. The churches dedicated to him are as countless as the places and the faithful named after him. He is especially revered by the Russian people as the protector of crops, and in the West he is regarded as the patron of schoolchildren and of young people in general.

THERE ARE MANY INTERESTING BOOKS in our church library. Why not take one out and see the wealth of spirituality that might be missing from your life. Please see Alice Kotala to take that certain book out, but we ask that you please return them on the specified date so that others may enjoy it also.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN OUR ANNUAL CHURCH CHRISTMAS CARD is being requested once again this year. A form will be sent out to each home for you to be a sponsor of our card. This is a beautiful way as an Orthodox Christian to wish to others the joyous Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. Your name(s) will be included on this card. We ask that you please return it promptly by the due date.



PLEASE KEEP IN MIND that it is very disrespectful to have conversations with others before and during the Divine Liturgy, especially during the reception of Holy Communion. Let us concern ourselves with our own spirituality as well as those who are praying and trying to get closer to Christ Jesus!

Wisdom of the Church Fathers and the Monastic Life

Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honour your patience.—*St. John Climacus (St. John of the Ladder)*

Do all in your power not to fall, for the strong athlete should not fall. But if you do fall, get up again at once and continue the contest. Even if you fall a thousand times because of the withdrawal of God's grace, rise up again each time, and keep on doing this until the day of your death. For it is written, 'If a righteous man falls down seven times' – that is repeatedly throughout his life – 'seven times shall he rise again' (Proverbs 24:16). — *St. John of Karpathos*

God descends to the humble as waters flow down from the hills into the valleys. — *St. Tikhon of Voronezh*

I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, "What can get through from such snares?" Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Humility". — *St. Anthony the Great*

God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil – for the devil is cold – let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance. — *St. Seraphim of Sarov*

Every day you provide your bodies with good to keep them from failing. In the same way your good works should be the daily nourishment of your hearts. Your bodies are fed with food and your spirits with good works. You aren't to deny your soul, which is going to live forever, what you grant to your body, which is going to die. — *St. Gregory the Great*

The demons are sleepless and immaterial, death is at hand, and I am weak. Lord, help me; do not let Your creature perish, for You care for me in my misery. — *St. Peter of Damascus*

Live in constant glorification of and thanksgiving towards God, for the greatest sin is ingratitude and the worst sinner is the ungrateful person. — *Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain*

PARENTS ARE REMINDED that Christ has told us: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:16)

In the vast majority of cases, our children depend upon their parents or other family members for transportation to come to church. Please make every effort to insure that they are in church, on time, and present every week for Church School. The world and society in which we live is increasingly indifferent if not hostile to Christianity and Christian values. Given everything else that they are exposed to, it is essential that they (and we adults) worship, pray, partake of the Eucharist and learn about the beauty, power and riches that our Orthodox faith provides to those who learn to understand and experience it.

Leading by example, let us all make a sincere effort to show our children that God and His Church is the most important priority in our lives, a priority that is not displaced by sporting events or other temptations to relax and sleep in when we should be worshipping the Triune God whom we profess to love and honor.

MY LIFE IN CHRIST

Your soul seeks true life and its natural food.

The food of the mind is truth; the food of the heart is peace and blessedness; the food of the will is lawfulness.

Go to the Church; she will give you all this in plenty, for she possesses it superabundantly.

She is the pillar and ground of the truth, because in her is the Word of God, manifesting the origin of all things – the origin of the human race, how man was created after the image and likeness of God, how he fell, and has been restored through the Redeemer of mankind; in her also is revealed the means of salvation, faith, hope and love.

She affords us peace and blessedness through her divine service, above all through the sacraments.

She calls us: Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

She teaches us the true way which leads to eternal life – the way of God's commandments.

— *St. John of Kronstadt*

WHAT A GREAT JOB EVERYONE DID at our 6th Annual Greek Festival. The food was excellent; the weather was great; the band was good; the smiles were abundant. Thank you to those who worked many long hours, before, during, and after our festival. If anyone has any good ideas for next year's festival, please bring them to the attention of any parish board officer. Well done, good and faithful servants of the Lord!

DUE TO FATHER JOHN'S WORK SCHEDULE IN BUFFALO, please pay particular attention to your answering machines or to the church's website — (holyltrinityaltoona.org) for cancellation of Divine Liturgy on a Sunday. A parish board member will call you in the event that the Sunday Divine Liturgy is cancelled. You will be notified by that Saturday in the early afternoon. When in doubt, please call our church telephone...the cancellation will be announced on our answering machine.

THOSE WHO WISH TO make the altar bread (prosfora) for the Divine Liturgy, please see Fr. John. This is a very worthwhile ministry within the church. The recipe/article on prosfora is on our back window pamphlet stand.